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Soviet Union Declines to Accept U2 Flights Over Turkey

By Don Oberdorfer

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The Soviet Union has refused to acquiesce to United States reconnaissance flights over Turkey to aid verification of the strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT II), informed official sources said yesterday.

The Russian attitude, conveyed to Washington through diplomatic channels since an inconclusive discussion at the Vienna summit meeting three weeks ago, has generated additional U.S. interest in an alternative verification plan involving improved radio interception facilities in Norway.

Norwegian Prime Minister Odvar Nordli was quoted by the Oslo newspaper Aftenposten as saying that "If the United States and the Soviet Union want Norway to play a part in the implementation of the SALT II agreement, Norway would be willing to do this."

Nordli's attitude was news to American diplomats concerned with Norwegian affairs, evidently because discussion of the highly sensitive questions involving surveillance of the Soviet Union has been carried on outside of regular diplomatic channels.

Nordli's statement could be interpreted to mean that, as in the case of Turkey, Norway will insist that the Soviets give their assent to new U.S. intelligence operations designed to support verification of the strategic arms limitation treaty.

Soviet approval of improved Norwegian facilities seems doubtful in view of Moscow's refusal to cooperate on the Turkish flights. Additional cause for doubt is Soviet media criticism of the Norway bases plan following its publication June 29 by The New York Times.

A Radio Moscow broadcast earlier this week, referring to public discussion of Norwegian intelligence bases, called the facilities "yet another part of the military presence in Scandinavia . . . another lever for influencing the border country's policy." The broadcast maintained that Norwegian bases are not needed for verification of SALT II and charged that they would have "no connection" with the interests of detente in Europe.

Another article in the Oslo newspaper, however, quoted unnamed "Norwegian authorities" as saying the Soviet Union is not expected to oppose Norway's becoming more involved in the monitoring of SALT II through facilities on Norwegian soil. A Norwegian defense official was quoted as confirming that an existing listening station in Norway, manned by Norwegian personnel, is capable of monitoring Soviet strategic weapons systems.

The reported U.S. plan is to use the combination of an improved American space satellite and improvements in the Norwegian ground intercept stations to provide additional data on Soviet missile testing performance. The information would substitute for some of the data previously obtained by U.S. monitoring stations in Iran, which were near the Soviet missile testing sites.

Verification of the highly technical provisions of the SALT II agreement

is a sensitive issue in the Senate debate on ratification. The United States has several methods for monitoring Soviet weapons developments, but there is disagreement on whether they are precise and accurate enough to do the job with assurance.

Despite the Soviet message declining to approve U2 reconnaissance flights over Turkish territory just across the Soviet border, U.S. officials have not given up on that plan to improve verification. Further talks on the matter both with Moscow and Ankara are expected.

In addition to the U2 flights, at least five other means of improving verification are under development by the United States, according to a recent statement by Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.), chairman of the House intelligence oversight subcommittee.

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